

June 19, 2020



Today is the 155th anniversary of Juneteenth, which celebrates the long road to freedom for enslaved black people in America. Today our country confronts the truth that African Americans do not have freedom from racism in American institutions. As we watched the events of the last few weeks, beginning with the horrific murder of George Floyd, and continuing with the death of Rayshard Brooks, our organization is thinking and grappling with our response. As a community, we see and join those mourning the deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, Rayshard Brooks and too many others who died needlessly in cities all across America. These are not isolated incidents. They reflect a pattern of systemic racism.

We express our solidarity with the black community and declare unequivocally that Black Lives Matter. We acknowledge we have not done all we can to bring about equity and inclusivity in our organization. While our strategic plan of 2017 includes a goal to make our programs more inclusive and equitable, we simply have not made enough progress towards reaching this goal. Moving forward, we commit to the following:

1. We will focus on the recruitment and retention of students of color in our orchestras.
2. We will focus on providing a comfortable and safe rehearsal environment for all students through listening, learning and gathering feedback from our student and parent community.
3. We will provide greater education for our staff and board on how to become more diverse and inclusive of communities of color, including in our hiring and staffing practices.
4. We will continue to explore and program repertoire from composers from outside the traditional Euro-American canon while continuing to seek collaborations with arts organizations that celebrate diversity in our community.

We will continue to provide our community with updates on how we are working to take concrete action in this area. All of us—our artistic, administrative and board leadership—strive to help our community and nation heal. Our passion and focus is the universal language of music, and providing an opportunity for music-making at a high level that is inclusive to all students.

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on behalf of the staff and board of the Minnesota Youth Symphonies